Psychological Correlates of Social Media Addiction among Adolescents

Introduction-

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now a vital component of modern life, impacting numerous areas such as healthcare, education, business, and everyday tasks. AI technologies, ranging from machine learning to natural language processing, continue to evolve, reshaping how people work, communicate, and interact with the world. In the life of adolescents social media plays a major role, influencing how they interact socially, express themselves, and find entertainment. However, excessive use of these platforms has led to a growing concern over social media addiction, which may have adverse effects on mental health, academic achievement, and real-life relationships. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has further intensified this issue, as algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement, keeping adolescents hooked through personalized content, endless scrolling, and AI-driven recommendations.

During adolescents, social media has become a key part of regular life; however, its excessive use has sparked concerns about possible negative effects on adolescents' mental health and overall well-being. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as social media addiction**,** involves compulsive usage patterns that interfere with an individual's daily functioning and interpersonal relationships. Adolescents, due to their heightened sensitivity to peer influence and social comparison, are particularly susceptible to the addictive potential of these platforms. Social media fosters a culture of idealized beauty standards through heavily curated and edited content. Adolescents who compare themselves to such unrealistic portrayals may experience dissatisfaction with their own appearance, lowering their body-esteem.

The reliance on superficial online interactions may reduce opportunities for deep emotional exchanges, impairing adolescents' ability to process and communicate their feelings effectively. Adolescents often equate the validation they receive online—through likes, comments, and followers—with their self-worth. This external dependence can erode intrinsic self-esteem, leaving adolescents vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy. Adolescents who replace face-to-face interactions with online communication may struggle to build meaningful relationships, deepening their sense of social isolation. In conclusion, exploring the psychological impacts of social media addiction among adolescents is essential to addressing the challenges posed by this pervasive phenomenon.

Social Media Addiction- Many people believe that addiction typically involves the use of substances like alcohol etc. However, compulsive behaviors or habits can also be considered forms of addiction (Harris, Vardaxis & Nagy 2014). Social media addiction is not legitimately classified as a clinical disorder in the *(DSM-5)*, but it shares similar characteristics with behavioral addictions like gambling. It involves compulsive and repetitive use of social platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat, often at the expense of real-life relationships, work, or education. Social media addiction is a type of internet obsession (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). People who excess time on social media often feel the need to stay constantly updated, craving instant notifications. This can lead to an increased tolerance for online interactions, excessive virtual communication, and various digital-related challenges.

The habits that drive individuals to engage in these behaviors are what define SMA. SMA has become a growing concern worldwide, as more people spend increasing amounts of time on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube. This form of addiction is marked by a compulsive need to use social media despite negative consequences in one's personal, academic, or professional life. Social media addiction refers to an irresistible urge or excessive fixation on using social networking platforms, often resulting in emotional distress (Weinstein & Lejoyeux, 2010). Generally its symptoms include an inability to reduce usage, feeling anxious or irritable when unable to access social media, and neglecting important tasks to spend time online. Major symptoms include:

- **Compulsive use**: Feeling the need to check notifications constantly or scroll endlessly.
- **Neglect of responsibilities**: Ignoring work, school, or family duties.
- **Mood modification**: Using social media to relieve negative emotions like sadness or boredom.
- **Withdrawal symptoms**: Feeling anxious, irritable, or restless when not using social media.
- **Tolerance**: Needing to spend more time online to feel satisfied or connected.
- **Loss of control**: Being unable to cut down on use despite wanting to.
- **Negative impact**: Experiencing problems in personal or professional life due to social media usage.

Adolescent brain is still developing, especially areas related to self-regulation and impulse control. Those who feel isolated or have low self-worth may turn to social media as a source of validation and social interaction. Primack et al. (2017) found a correlation between high social media usage and feelings of social isolation. Social media has undeniable benefits, including connectivity, education, and entertainment. However, for some users, these benefits come at a cost to their mental and physical well-being. Awareness, self-regulation, and healthier online behaviors can help balance the positive aspects of social media with its risks.

Mindfulness and social media addiction-

Mindfulness involves maintaining attention on the present moment non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindfulness and social media addiction are inversely related—higher mindfulness levels tend to reduce excessive social media use. Practicing mindfulness helps individuals regain control over their online habits, fostering healthier digital interactions. Hormes et al. (2014) found that individuals with lower mindfulness levels had higher tendencies for problematic Facebook use. Wang et al. (2020) reported that mindfulness meditation significantly decreased SM usage and enhanced mental well-being. Mindfulness reduces the need to escape unpleasant emotions through online distraction (Guendelman et al., 2017).

Elhai et al. (2018) demonstrated that mindfulness interventions reduced problem1atic smartphone and social media use. Mindfulness promotes emotional well-being, reducing the urge to use social media as an escape (Lan et al., 2018). A meta-analysis by Meynadier et al. (2024) found a significant association between lower trait mindfulness and higher levels of problematic social media use. Lan et al. (2018) found that trait mindfulness negatively correlated with social media addiction among college students, mediated by self-control and attentional bias. Women tend to report greater reductions in stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms following mindfulness interventions (Rojiani et al., 2017). A study by de Vibe et al. (2015) found that women were more likely to participate in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) programs. Britton et al. (2018) Study found that female students reported greater improvements in emotional well-being compared to their male counterparts.

Resilience and Social Media Addiction-

The American Psychological Association defines resilience as: "The process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences,

especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands." Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from difficulties, adapt to change, and keep going despite challenges. It can refer to emotional, psychological, or physical toughness, as well as the capacity of systems or materials to withstand stress and return to their original state. Several studies suggest that resilience serves as a protective factor against social media addiction. Individuals with high resilience tend to have better emotional regulation and coping strategies, reducing their reliance on social media as an escape mechanism (Yang et al., 2020).

Strategies such as mindfulness training, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and promoting offline social engagement can enhance resilience levels, thereby reducing problematic social media use (Alim et al., 2012). Research indicates that individuals with high resilience are less likely to develop addictive behaviors, as they can manage stress and negative emotions more effectively (Mei et al., 2020). Individuals with low resilience may use social media as a coping mechanism for stress, loneliness, and low self-esteem, increasing their hazard of addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017). Yu & Shek (2018) reported that adolescents with greater emotional resilience exhibited healthier social media usage patterns.

Hou et al. (2019) reported that resilience negatively predicted SMA among Chinese university students, suggesting that resilience promotes emotional regulation and adaptive coping.A meta-analysis by Gök and Koğar (2021) found that men generally exhibit higher levels of psychological resilience than women. Arslan (2021) found that adolescents with higher psychological resilience showed significantly lower tendencies toward problematic social media use. Women often face additional resilience challenges due to gender-based discrimination, caregiving responsibilities, and economic disparities (Gilligan, 1982; Ungar, 2011). Men, however, tend to exhibit resilience through assertiveness and confidence, which can be beneficial in competitive work environments (Heilman, 2012). Strengthening resilience through psychological and behavioural interventions can potentially reduce problematic social media use. Resilience plays a crucial role in mitigating the risk and severity of social media addiction. By promoting psychological resilience, individuals may develop healthier coping mechanisms, reducing reliance on digital platforms for emotional relief.

Body Esteem and Social Media Addiction- Body esteem, often referred to as body image or body confidence, is the way people perceive, feel, and think about their physical appearance. Franzoi & Shields (1984) define body esteem as an individual's self-evaluation of their body,

encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects related to appearance, weight satisfaction, and body functioning. How people view themselves can impact their confidence in social settings and influence their relationships. The connection between body-esteem (also known as body image) and social media addiction has garnered increasing attention in modern research, especially as platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snap chat emphasize appearance-based content. Perloff (2024) examines how social media exposure, especially platforms focusing on images, affects young people's body esteem, frequent exposure to edited images and societal beauty standards can lower body esteem and increase body dissatisfaction, especially in women and adolescents who often engage in upward social comparisons.

Perloff (2014) suggests that social media acts as a "catalyst for body image concerns" due to the continuous cycle of social comparison and feedback, which affects self-perception. This study particularly highlights young women as a group at high risk for developing body image issues due to social media. Meier and Gray (2014) found that time spent on Facebook can lead to more negative body image in young women due to the tendency for appearance comparisons. Fardouly et al. (2015) found that social media platforms that emphasize images, such as Instagram and Facebook, lead to higher rates of social comparison and body dissatisfaction. Regular exposure to altered or filtered images fosters unrealistic beauty standards, leading to increased dissatisfaction with one's body. Algorithms prioritize popular content, which often reflects unattainable beauty ideals, increasing the likelihood of body dissatisfaction (Huang, 2020).

Studies consistently show that increased time on social media, especially when involving photo-based interactions (e.g., posting selfies, viewing influencers), is associated with, Lower body satisfaction, Increased body surveillance and Greater internalization of thin or muscular ideals (Fardouly, J., et al., 2015).Women tend to report lower body esteem than men, often due to societal pressures emphasizing thinness and physical beauty (Murnen & Smolak, 2020). Women are more likely to make social comparisons based on appearance, which can result in lower body satisfaction (Fardouly et al., 2015). These studies provide a basis for understanding how social media can adversely impact body-esteem, contributing to compulsive usage patterns and underscoring the need for education and healthy social media practices. Social media addiction is a growing concern that significantly affects body esteem, particularly among youth and young adults. As users increasingly seek validation and engage in appearance-based comparisons, body dissatisfaction may rise.

Alexithymia and Social media addiction-

Psychiatrist Peter Sifneos first introduced the term *alexithymia* in 1973, and found that people with this trait often had difficulty recognizing emotions and tended to focus more on external events rather than internal emotions (Sifneos, 1973). So alexithymia is a psychological trait where individuals struggle to recognize, understand, and express their emotions.. Lyvers et al., 2016**,** found that higher levels of alexithymia were positively associated with problematic internet use, particularly when mediated by poor emotion regulation. Alexithymia affects about 10%-13% of the general population, with higher rates observed in individuals with psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety (Taylor et al., 1997). Those with alexithymia may turn to digital interactions to compensate for impaired offline interpersonal functioning (Wegmann et al., 2015).

Investigation on alexithymia and social media addiction has gained traction in recent years. Alexithymia, increase the risk of developing addictive behaviors, including social media addiction. People with alexithymia may turn to social media as a way to cope with or escape from their difficulties in emotional regulation, thereby increasing their risk for problematic use. Mahapatra and Sharma (2018) showed that alexithymia contributed to social media addiction, mediated by loneliness and self-esteem deficits. Dong et al. (2019) found that individuals with higher levels of alexithymia were more likely to use social media in an excessive or compulsive manner. Kuss and Griffiths (2011) discovered that people with alexithymia are more likely to use social media as a means of distraction and escape, increasing their risk of developing an addiction. Zhu et al. (2022) explores that alexithymic individuals tend to rely on social media to alleviate feelings of loneliness and social disconnection, although this can paradoxically increase feelings of isolation over time.

Hogan and Strasburger (2018) suggested that alexithymic individuals might engage in more passive social media use (e.g., scrolling without interaction) to avoid direct emotional engagement. Satici and Uysal (2015) explored the relationship between alexithymia, social media addiction, and well-being, noting that alexithymic individuals often report lower life satisfaction and use social media as a method of managing emotions, despite this behavior exacerbating their addiction. Research consistently indicates that men score higher on alexithymia than women across different populations (Salminen et al., 1999; Mattila et al., 2010). Women are generally encouraged to express emotions more openly leading to lower alexithymia scores (Teten et al., 2008). These studies underline the significant impact that

alexithymia has on social media use and addiction, highlighting the need for more targeted interventions to address emotional regulation and healthier coping strategies.

Self –esteem and social media addiction-

American Psychological Association states that self –esteem is "The degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in one's self-concept are perceived to be positive." Rosenberg (1965), who described self-esteem as: "A positive or negative attitude toward oneself as a totality." Self-esteem is essentially how we perceive and value ourselves. It reflects our inner beliefs about our worth, abilities, and overall value as a person. Healthy self-esteem allows us to handle challenges with resilience, build strong relationships, and approach life with a sense of self-assurance. Conversely, having low self-esteem may result in self-doubt, fear of making mistakes, and a habit of being excessively self-critical. Research has highlighted a bidirectional relationship between self-esteem and social media addiction. Low self-esteem often drives individuals to seek validation and social communication through social media, while excessive use can further diminish self-esteem due to exposure to unrealistic comparisons and negative online interactions.

The study highlighted that person with low self-esteem are more likely to develop social media addiction as they seek external validation and social connectedness online (Andreassen et al., 2012).The study revealed that people who often matched themselves to idealized images on social media tended to have lower self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014). It found that individual's addicted to social media often experience lower self-esteem due to the constant comparison with others, contributing to reduced life satisfaction (Hawi & Samaha, 2017). It is found that adolescents those with higher social media usage had significantly lower self-esteem and increased levels of anxiety (Woods & Scott, 2016). A meta-analysis by Huang (2017) found that lower self-esteem is significantly associated with increased social media use, particularly in the form of compulsive checking and posting.

Males typically show somewhat higher self-esteem compared to females, particularly in adolescence and adulthood (Kling et al., 1999; Orth & Robins, 2014). Boys often experience a boost in self-esteem due to societal reinforcement of assertiveness and independence, whereas girls may experience a decline due to body image concerns and social expectations (Buchanan & Selmon, 2008). Social media platforms encourage users to seek validation through likes, shares, and comments. Women tend to have lower self-esteem regarding body image, often

influenced by societal beauty standards (Gentile et al., 2009). It is concluded that while social media can serve as an effective means for communication and self-expression, excessive use and addiction may negatively impact self-esteem in multiple ways. Promoting mindful social media use, setting screen time limits, and focusing on real-life interactions can help mitigate its negative effects on self-worth.

Loneliness and social media addiction-

In psychology**,** loneliness is officially defined as a distressing feeling that results from a discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). The American Psychological Association (APA) defines loneliness as: "Affective and cognitive discomfort or uneasiness from being or perceiving oneself to be alone or socially isolated." The relationship between loneliness and social media addiction is complex and bidirectional; here various research studies exploring how these phenomena influence each other. Twenge et al. (2017) found that increased smartphone and social media use correlates with higher loneliness and depressive symptoms among adolescents.

Huang (2017) conducted a meta-analysis showing that passive use of social media (scrolling without interaction) is associated with higher loneliness, while active use (engaging with others) may have less negative impact. Keles, et al. (2020) highlighted that social media negatively affects mental health, especially among young people, by increasing loneliness and social comparison. Research shows that lonely individuals are more likely to use social media intensively as a substitute for face-to-face interactions (Baker & Algorta, 2016). Studies also suggest that the passive consumption of content—scrolling without engaging—correlates more strongly with feelings of loneliness compared to active use, such as messaging friends (Verduyn et al., 2017). The impact of social media on loneliness varies by demographic factors such as age and personality traits. Women tend to have larger and more emotionally supportive social networks**,** which can buffer against loneliness (Antonucci et al., 2001).

Research shows that young men report higher levels of loneliness than young women, possibly due to differences in social skills and friendships (Borys & Perlman, 1985). Men often adopt problem-focused or avoidant coping mechanisms**,** which can sometimes exacerbate feelings of loneliness (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). It is concluded that the relationship between loneliness and social media addiction is complex and bidirectional, with each factor reinforcing

the other. While social media can offer temporary social support, excessive dependence may lead to deeper isolation.

Rationale of research –

- The increase of social media has significantly reshaped adolescents' interactions and self-perceptions, making it a vital area of research.
- This study aims to explore the psychological correlates of social media addiction among adolescents, focusing on factors such as mindfulness, resilience, body –esteem, alexithymia, self-esteem and loneliness.
- Trait mindfulness—the ability to maintain a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment—has been shown to enhance self-regulation, reduce impulsivity, and promote emotional well-being. Since SMA is often driven by automatic and compulsive behaviors, individuals with higher trait mindfulness may be better able to recognize and control their social media usage. By examining the role of mindfulness, researchers can determine whether mindfulness-based interventions may help mitigate the negative effects of SMA.
- People with higher resilience are better equipped to handle emotional distress caused by excessive social media use. They are more likely to regulate their emotions, maintain a balanced perspective, and avoid excessive dependency on online validation. Investigating resilience in relation to SMA can provide insights into whether fostering resilience can reduce the risk of addiction or buffer its negative effects.
- Adolescents often use social media to compare themselves with peers or influencers, leading to distorted body image and dissatisfaction. Research is needed to examine whether social media addiction exacerbates these tendencies and identify which adolescents are most vulnerable.
- Adolescents with high alexithymic traits may gravitate toward social media to escape emotional discomfort, perpetuating a cycle of addiction. Exploring this link can uncover how emotional regulation deficits contribute to social media addiction and its psychological consequences.
- Self-esteem is a cornerstone of adolescent development, influencing academic, social, and personal success. Excessive social media use has been found to lower self-esteem through mechanisms like cyber bullying, social comparisons, and dependence on external validation. By analyzing how self-esteem interacts with Social media addiction, researchers can better understand its role in adolescent well-being.

- Social media addiction may create a paradoxical effect where online interactions replace meaningful offline relationships, deepening feelings of isolation. Studying the relationship between loneliness and SMA is crucial to untangling this complex dynamic.
- The findings will contribute to the growing field of digital psychology and adolescent mental health, emphasizing the need for responsible social media use and promoting healthier online behaviors.
- By exploring these dynamics, the study can provide valuable insights for parents, educators, clinicians, and policymakers seeking to promote healthier online and offline behaviors among adolescents.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship of mindfulness with social media addiction among adolescents.
2. To study the relationship of resilience with social media addiction among adolescents.
3. To study the relationship of body- esteem with social media addiction among adolescents.
4. To study the relationship of alexithymia with social media addiction among adolescents.
5. To study the relationship of self - esteem with social media addiction among adolescents.
6. To study the relationship of loneliness with social media addiction among adolescents.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant relationship between mindfulness and social media addiction among adolescents.
2. There will be significant relationship between resilience and social media addiction among adolescents.
3. There will be significant relationship between body esteem and social media addiction among adolescents.
4. There will be significant relationship between alexithymia and social media addiction among adolescents.
5. There will be significant relationship between self- esteem and social media addiction among adolescents.
6. There will be significant relationship between loneliness and social media addiction among adolescents.

METHOD

3.1 Sample - The sample of this research would consist of 500 Adolescents (13-19 years) from Hisar and adjoining districts of western Haryana. Out of these 500 adolescents, 250 would be males and 250 would be female.

Table – 3.01

Description of Sample of Study

Sample			
Males		**Females**	
Urban	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**
125	**125**	**125**	**125**
TOTAL= 500			

3.2 Inclusion criteria-

1. Adolescence having domicile of Haryana state only will be included in this study.
2. Males and Females both are included in this study.
3. Participants of both urban and rural areas are included.

3.3 Exclusion criteria-

1. Adolescence having history of mental illness will be excluded in this study.

3.4 Ethical Criterion

1. Participants received assurances regarding the privacy of the responses they gave.
2. Involvement of free will and Informed consent will be taken from participants.
3. Participants were given the assurance that they might withdraw at any time without facing any repercussions before the data collection.

3.5 Measures

To accomplish the objectives of the study and data collection, the following tests and scales were used:

Description of Scales Used in Research

Psychological tools/ scales are instruments to study a particular aspect behavior, thus various tests, scales and inventories have important role for social psychologist. Psychological scales used here are important devices as without the use of these it was impossible to explore. Psychological scales used in this research:

Social Media Addiction Scale - Student Form (Cengiz Şahin *2018)-* It developed by Cengiz Şahin in 2018, to assess social media addiction among secondary school, high school, and university students. The scale comprises 29 items grouped into four factors: virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problems, and virtual information. It utilizes a 5-point Likert-type scale to measure responses. 0.93 is Cronbach's alpha value.0.94 is the test-retest reliability coefficient. The scale's validity has been established through expert evaluations and statistical analyses, including exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, which confirm its four-factor structure accounting for 53.16% of the total variance.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale Brown and Ryan (2003) developed this, a 15-item questionnaire designed to assess how often individuals experience mindful state over time. Responses are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, where lower scores reflect higher levels of mindfulness. The scale has good internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$) and demonstrates strong validity through correlations with mindfulness and well-being measures. It effectively distinguishes between groups with varying mindfulness levels.

Brief Resilience Scale- The scale, comprising six items, was developed by Smith et al. (2008), including statements like "It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens" and "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times." It is five point Likert scale.

Body Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults - The 23-item self-assessment tool developed by Mendelson et al. (2001) is structured around three subscales: personal attitudes toward appearance, contentment with body weight, and beliefs about how others view one's appearance. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (always). Scores for each subscale, as well as the overall score, were calculated by summing the relevant items. A higher BES score indicates a higher level of body esteem.

The Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire (PAQ) (Dr. David Preece and colleagues *2018)* - PAQ developed by Dr. David Preece and colleagues, is a 24-item self-report measure designed to

assess alexithymia. This questionnaire can be applied on adolescents. PAQ utilizes a 7-point Likert scale. The PAQ measures alexithymia through five distinct dimensions. These dimensions collectively provide a comprehensive assessment of an individual's capacity to identify, describe, and process both positive and negative emotions, as well as their general orientation toward emotional experiences.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (**Rosenberg, M., 1979)–** The scale includes 10 items and is a self-report tool designed to assess an individual's self-esteem. It is four point rating scale.

UCLA Loneliness Scale- Comprising 8 items, the ULS-8 is adapted from the revised version of UCLA Loneliness Scale developed by DiMatteo and Hays. Participants respond using a 4-point Likert scale, from 1 (never) to 4 (always).This widely used instrument is designed to assess an individual's subjective experience of loneliness and social isolation. The scale demonstrates a high reliability score of .95.

Statistical Analysis – Appropriate statistical tools will be used according to data.

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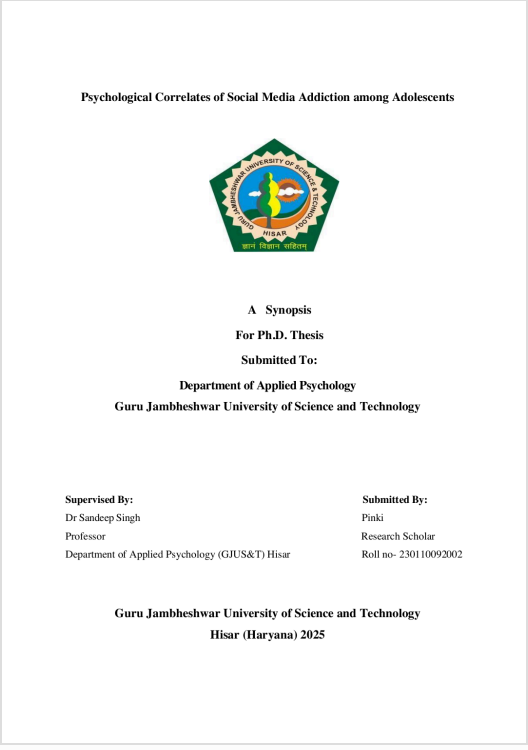

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